

September 27, 1965



From Rusk: A warning



From Mao: An ultimatum



From Nehru: An appeal

CPYRGHT

Bluff, Bombast—or a Danse Macabre?

Just as the undeclared war between India and Pakistan over Kashmir seemed to be settling into a lull last week, a fresh wave of apprehension enveloped the globe. Suddenly, it seemed each tick of the clock might be edging Washington and the world closer to the nuclear age's latest danse macabre. And this time, the choreographers were the Communist Chinese.

Peking's contemptuous, 72-hour ultimatum to India to abandon its military outposts along the Himalayan border (page 42) might be all bluff and bombast. But the Indians reported that the Chinese were moving troops up to the frontier between Tibet and the Indian protectorate of Sikkim. And the mere threat of Chinese intervention underscored the calamitous potential of the conflict raging on the subcontinent. Mao Tse-tung's Chinese could ignite the fireworks as they chose—a major invasion reminiscent of 1962, a flurry of hit-and-run raids, perhaps no military action at all. How would Moscow react to a thrust by the rival Chinese against India? What should the American response be?

As Peking's weekend deadline approached, Lyndon Johnson grappled with the multi-faceted problem. Beneath the Capital's studiously serene façade plenty of crisis thinking was going on. While Pentagon officials dusted off their contingency plans for possible military moves against China, American diplomats around the world sampled the opinions of friendly governments on options open to the U.S. Then the President sat down with his top foreign-policy advisers—Dean Rusk, George Ball, Rob-

ert McNamara, McGeorge Bundy and the CIA's Adm. William Raborn—for a two-hour review of the situation. That night, U.N. Ambassador Arthur Goldberg told a Washington meeting of the World Conference on World Peace Through Law that the Kashmir crisis "is perhaps the most serious conflict between member states" the U.N. has ever faced.

Next day, Goldberg presided at an inconclusive special Saturday session of the Security Council trying to end the fighting between India and Pakistan before the Chinese deadline ran out.

From the beginning of the war in Kashmir between two American allies, the interventionist-prone Johnson Administration has focused its hopes for peace on the U.N. But faced with the Chinese threat, the Indians—once the U.N.'s staunchest backers—began to clamor for unilateral American (and Soviet) guarantees of assistance should the Security Council fail.

'China Will Attack': The day after the Chinese delivered their ultimatum, Indian Ambassador B.K. Nehru called on Secretary of State Rusk, who earlier in the week had warned Peking to mind its own business. "It is our impression Communist China will attack," he told newsmen later. "I believe that all the nations of the world should come to the aid of a nation that is attacked if we are to defend international order." In New Delhi, the Indian Army chief of staff appealed to the U.S. to revoke its suspension of military aid if China moved against India's border outposts—a request American officials indicated was likely to be honored.

Beyond that, the measure of American response depended on the degree, nature and intensity and long-range intent of a Chinese attack.

As the weekend drew to a close, few in Washington expected a Chinese assault massive enough to trigger a major American response. The Washington position was that a Chinese feint at Sikkim would not itself amount to a threat to the U.S. national interest—a position curiously comparable to Peking's in respect to U.S. intervention in South Vietnam. But in the snowy Himalayas, Mao's Peking—not LBJ's Washington—held the initiative.

Super Lyndon

It was a week to tax the mettle of even Lyndon Johnson. While the Chinese Communist threat ominously escalated the war over Kashmir half the world away, back home in the Senate, Arkansas's scholarly J. William Fulbright, chairman of the prestigious Foreign Relations Committee, denounced the Administration's handling of the Dominican crisis (page 27). And even closer to home, Mr. Johnson accepted the resignations of two of his most prolific special assistants, New Frontiersman Richard Goodwin and old Johnson hand Horace Busby—opening a word gap in the White House's ghost-writing corps.

With all that, the President still found time to play his two favorite roles: The Great Peacemaker and The Great Educator. Facing 2,500 of the globe's top lawyers and jurists at the week-long World Conference on World